BRITISH
COLUMBIA

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Honourable Steven L. Point, OBC
Xwĕ lī qwĕl tĕl
Lieutenant-Governor

— at the —

Opening of the Fourth Session,

Thirty-Eighth Parliament

— of the —

Province of British Columbia

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In opening this session of the 38th Parliament, it is important we remember and honour the contributions of British Columbians who have passed away since this Assembly last convened.

We all owe a special debt of gratitude to Master Corporal Colin Bason and Master Corporal Darrell Priede, who fell while serving in Afghanistan.

We mourn the passing of former members of this Assembly: George Mussallem, Burton Peter Campbell, Frank Garden, and Peter Rolston.

We have lost a giant of the Canadian legal profession — former B.C. Chief Justice Allan McEachern, as well as his colleagues former B.C. Supreme Court Justice Dermod Owen Flood, and former provincial court Judge Sidney Clark.

Many great British Columbians left us this past year, but their legacies remain.

We will miss Chief Harry Pierre of the Tl'azt'en Nation, Chief Patrick Alfred of the Namgis First Nation, hereditary Chief Cosmos Richard Frank of the Ahousaht First Nation, Chief James Cooper of the T'Sou-ke Nation, and Tsartlip First Nation Elder Dr. Sammy Sam.

Dr. William Sauder was a philanthropist and a leader in business and education who, with Herb Doman, helped define our forest industry in the last half century.

Exemplary citizens like Jannit Rabinovitch, Colleen McCrory, Dr. Gary Randhawa, Norval Morrisseau, Philip Despard Pemberton Holmes, Jane Rule, W.D. West, and the "Urban Peasant" James Barber have all left us.

As have George Athans Sr., Gary Lupul, Darcy Robinson, Roy Mah, Keith Bradbury, John Pifer, Colin Price and Jeani Read.

We salute the 63 dedicated members of the B.C. Public Service who passed away last year, among them, Autumn Jenkinson, John Webb, Regan Paetz, Kenyon Wells and Wayne Peters.

We will miss them all even as their contributions live on.

Today we begin the fourth session of the 38th Parliament of British Columbia. It is an auspicious day in an auspicious year.

Two years from today our province will host the world for the opening of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. Over two billion people will witness that spectacle as the Olympic torch completes its journey and lights up BC Place.

British Columbians will watch with pride as the opening ceremonies introduce the world to our country and our province — from the grasslands of the Chilcotin and Cariboo, to the vast expanses of the

Peace, Northwest and North Coast, to the Kootenays, the Okanagan and Vancouver Island.

It will be a magic moment for us all as the world beholds the strength of B.C.'s First Nations, the diversity of our cultures and the character of all Canadians.

They will be our Olympics — the Olympics of Vancouver and Whistler. The Olympics of the Squamish, Lil'Wat, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam. As we watch that show unfold, all of Canada will be captured by the spirit of 2010 — the spirit of British Columbia — which will find its light in the eyes of our children.

This year, every venue for those Games will be completed and operational, with athletes training on their home field. The Olympics are a great unifying force. They are bringing our citizens together in support of Canada's athletes, in celebration of Canada's artists, and in pursuit of the most sustainable Games in history.

This year we celebrate another important milestone — British Columbia's 150th anniversary together. We celebrate our history, our heritage, and all that we have accomplished together. We look with confidence to the opportunities of our changed and changing world.

Building a New Relationship with B.C.'s First Nations

History has taught us that we all move forward by moving beyond the positions that have held us back.

That is the essence of your government's effort to build a New Relationship with First Nations.

It aspires to a brighter future for all Aboriginal Canadians, built on self-reliance and self-determination, and based on mutual respect, recognition and reconciliation.

The Transformative Change Accord calls on us to close the gaps for B.C.'s First Nations in health, housing, education and economic opportunity.

Working together, we are opening new doors for progress.

There are new land use agreements for the North Coast, the Central Coast, the Sea-to-Sky corridor, the area north of Tweedsmuir Park, and Haida Gwaii.

The true leadership provided by the Tsawwassen, the Huu-ay-aht, the Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7eth'h, the Toquaht, the Uchucklesaht, and the Ucluelet First Nations has resulted in the highest form of negotiated settlement — constitutionally protected treaties, which are awaiting ratification by Parliament. Those First Nations will soon join the Nisga'a.

Final agreement negotiations are underway with the Sliammon, Yale, Yekooche and In-SHUCK-ch Nations. The treaty process is producing real results. It can and will be improved.

Your government will support fast-tracked treaty negotiations at common tables, as suggested by the BC Treaty Commission and First Nations themselves. It will pursue "incremental treaty agreements" to help First Nations benefit earlier in the treaty-making process.

New mechanisms will facilitate effective engagement of all parties in meaningful consultation and help First Nations participate as equity partners in major economic development projects.

Aboriginal rights to harvest wood for domestic purposes on Crown land will be given new statutory recognition. New investments in carbon offset projects that benefit First Nations will be an integral part of your government's climate action plan.

The journey to reconciliation is about bridging the barriers that have divided Aboriginal Canadians from everyone else in Canada. Nowhere is that more important than in caring for our children.

It is time that all of Canada embraced Jordan's Principle. Simply put, that principle says the interests of Aboriginal children must always be paramount, and that no child, on- or off-reserve, should be put at risk due to jurisdictional disputes.

Your government will work with First Nations and the federal government to put Jordan's Principle into action, and to strengthen services for Aboriginal children and families.

New legislation will enable Aboriginal authorities to assume legal responsibility for the delivery of most child and family services in their communities.

Your government will contribute to the establishment of the Stehiyaq Healing and Wellness Village in the Fraser Valley. It will be a place of healing for Aboriginal youth and families from across British Columbia who are addressing histories of trauma, addiction and mental illness.

This August, the Cowichan Tribes will host the North American Indigenous Games. That event will be a celebration of competition, sport and First Nations cultures. Everyone is invited.

Our Common Goal is Sustainable Growth

We live in a time as transformative as the Industrial Revolution.

New knowledge, technology and solutions are reshaping our world at a record pace.

New challenges, like climate change, call everyone to action with new speed and urgency, and a new emphasis on sustainability.

New approaches, forward thinking and a new commitment to long-term results are demanded.

Your government's Five Great Goals for B.C. aspire to healthier families and sustainable health delivery; educational excellence; safe, supportive communities; environmental stewardship; and a strong economy.

Meeting those goals obliges us to act with resolve in a sustained effort to understand global change as both an ally and a fact of our lives.

The future we want is ours to build by taking actions that stand the test of time.

Each of our great goals is integrally linked to the others.

A healthy environment and educated populace are essential to healthy human development and a globally competitive economy. A safe, humane society is the object and outcome of an enlightened, prosperous and caring community. The bedrock of each goal is a strong economy.

Without a strong economy and prudent financial management, your government could not make record investments in health, education, housing, transportation and other public services, while still balancing the budget.

Equally critical to our success is long-term thinking that transcends the timelines of electoral cycles.

Many members of this legislature will not be alive in 2050. But most have or will have children and grandchildren who will be. It is for them, and all who follow in our footsteps, that today's decision makers must act.

Living Smart Starts with our Environment

British Columbians cherish their high quality of life and our province's natural environment.

Together, we have established new parks and new conservancies. More than 13 million hectares are now protected — an area equal to the size of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and P.E.I. combined, over 14 per cent of our province — more than any other jurisdiction in Canada.

Our forest management practices and environmental management are second to none.

This session, all members will be asked to build on that record of stewardship with new conservancies and parks envisioned in approved land use plans.

Amendments to the *Wildlife Act* will build on the Mountain Caribou Recovery Plan, the Vancouver Island Marmot Recovery Project and the Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy. Tough new penalties will prevent and punish poaching and killing endangered species.

Comprehensive air and water stewardship strategies will be released this spring, as new steps are taken to combat global warming.

British Columbians are taking decisive action on climate change.

The *Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act* now requires us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 33 per cent from 2007 levels by 2020, and by 80 per cent below 2007 levels by 2050.

The Climate Action Team is working to identify the most credible, aggressive and economically viable greenhouse gas reduction targets possible for 2012 and 2016. Legislated targets for both years will be put in place by December 31st.

Your government will be carbon neutral by 2010.

A climate action plan to advance those targets will be released shortly after the budget. It will be annually updated and founded on personal responsibility, sound science and economic reality. And it will be driven by one simple truth: it is people who cause global warming and it is people who must act to stop it.

Waiting for others to act is not a solution — it compounds the problem.

Taking refuge in the status quo because others refuse to change is not an answer. It's avoiding responsibility and being generationally selfish.

The argument that British Columbia's mitigation efforts are, in global terms, too miniscule to matter misses the point.

Every molecule of carbon dioxide released into our atmosphere by human activities matters. It hangs there for decades or even centuries, and adds to the accumulated burden of global warming on our planet.

The benefit of our actions is not negated by the actions of others who add to the problem. They are cumulatively beneficial, globally significant and scientifically discernible. They contribute to the efforts being taken by growing legions of people around the world who are acting today to prevent the problem from becoming even worse.

We cannot be paralyzed into inaction by the scale of the task at hand. Rather, we will act now to make a real difference, and to encourage behavioural changes that will drive sustainable growth as a global imperative.

Market forces can play a positive role in this regard.

You Choose. You Save.

By living smarter, we can save on energy, water and fuel consumption. We can reduce waste and get better value from our land, our limited natural resources and our tax dollars.

This will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and drive innovation that will create new jobs and opportunities. It will conserve water and energy, and save us money.

Your government will give citizens new choices for new savings. "You choose. You save."

It will reward smart choices and create the competitive advantages of higher productivity, lower costs, less waste and higher quality products for our industries.

That is why British Columbia is participating in the Western Climate Initiative, The Climate Registry, and the International Carbon Action Partnership.

This session, legislation will be introduced to facilitate British Columbia's participation in a regional "cap and trade" system that is being developed under the Western Climate Initiative. The framework for that system is scheduled for completion this year.

It will help large emitters meet their obligations to live within legally mandated, declining emissions "caps", at the lowest possible cost.

All British Columbians will be asked to do their part in meeting B.C.'s legislated greenhouse gas reduction targets and in conserving energy.

As the cost of producing new, clean electricity unavoidably goes up, consumers will be given new tools to help conserve energy and save money on their power bills.

BC Hydro has been instructed to install Power Smart meters in every home in British Columbia by 2012 that will give families new information and control over their power consumption.

New "inclining block" rate structures will also allow families to choose and save by making Power Smart choices.

These changes and the BC Energy Plan will be supported by a new legislated direction for the BC Utilities Commission.

Government will encourage smart developments that minimize waste and increase affordability through better use of land, energy, water and building design.

This new initiative — LiveSmart BC — will help to contain urban sprawl and reward development that creates more affordable housing, new green spaces and more people-friendly neighbourhoods.

Carbon-smart communities are energy-smart, water-smart, health-smart and resource-smart. They are communities designed for human needs at the lowest "lifecycle" cost and highest long-term benefit possible — with the least impact possible on our environment.

Green developments waiting for provincial environmental approvals will be fast-tracked and given priority.

The new Green Building Code will be finalized and implemented to save energy and water.

All new provincial public buildings will be constructed to LEED Gold or equivalent standards. Existing buildings will be retrofitted to make them more energy efficient, climate friendly and healthier for public servants.

A new Trees for Tomorrow program will launch a large, urban afforestation initiative. Millions of trees will be planted in backyards, schoolyards, hospital grounds, civic parks, campuses, parking lots and other public spaces across B.C.

Major investments in tree nurseries will be made to assist this initiative.

Those new trees will help clean our air and "lock away" carbon dioxide that would otherwise contribute to global warming.

Other legislation will require local governments to incorporate greenhouse gas reduction targets and supporting strategies in their Official Community Plans and Regional Growth Strategies.

The discharge of landfill gas will be regulated to foster the capture and conversion of emissions into clean energy.

A new "Brownfields to Greenfields" redevelopment strategy will target existing "dirty" sites for the creation of well-treed, green, liveable communities.

Higher densities will be encouraged around new transit routes to help make them more affordable and create affordable housing.

Better transit leads to reduced greenhouse gases, cleaner air, shorter transit times and healthier communities.

That is the intent of your government's new $14-billion vision for expanded public transit across B.C.

That initiative will double transit ridership and renew existing fleets with cleaner technologies. It will increase the number of buses by 60 per cent in areas outside of Metro Vancouver and double TransLink's bus fleet by 2020.

That will substantially reduce emissions. It will mean that many citizens in TransLink's region will see more transit routes as well as a bus every 15 minutes, 15 hours per day, seven days a week.

There will be new RapidBus BC lines on nine major routes in Kelowna, Victoria and Metro Vancouver. There will be four new rapid transit lines — the new Canada Line, Evergreen Line, UBC Line, and an upgraded and expanded Expo Line.

The new Port Mann Bridge will also restore public transit across that corridor for the first time in 20 years. There will be new investments in cycling paths and pedestrian paths across B.C.

All of these improvements will give people new opportunities to choose alternative forms of transit, with more routes, more options and new savings in time and vehicle costs.

To further reduce transportation-related emissions, this legislature will be asked to adopt new California-equivalent vehicle tailpipe emission standards, in tandem with California and a number of other states and provinces.

Standards for low-carbon fuel content will be adopted to reduce the carbon intensity of motor vehicle fuels by 10 per cent by 2020.

New incentives will be created to encourage the purchase of fuel efficient vehicles.

The Scrap-It program will be expanded to get older vehicles with higher emissions off the road, while promoting newer, cleaner vehicles across the province.

New investments will be made in plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, hydrogen-powered buses, clean retrofits of dirty diesel trucks and the electrification of truck stops.

All these initiatives will stimulate innovation and job creation.

The Innovative Clean Energy Fund will help create 100,000 solar roofs in British Columbia and build on B.C.'s expertise in solar technology.

The new BC Bioenergy Strategy will create new opportunities in clean technology for rural communities, for independent power producers, and for our forest and agriculture industries.

A new Pacific Carbon Trust will foster economic growth from new opportunities in carbon credit trading and carbon offsets.

It will invest in made-in-B.C. offset projects that produce emissions reductions that are permanent,

measurable, verifiable, and additional, and that are regulated by government.

Projects in energy efficiency, renewable energy, carbon capture and sequestration — including incremental tree planting — will all be eligible.

The Trust will manage the revenues generated from your government's plan to become carbon neutral by 2010. It will be open to offset purchases from private citizens, companies and other governments alike.

These new initiatives will help reduce British Columbia's greenhouse gas emissions while also creating jobs in new fields of employment like carbon accounting, carbon brokerage, carbon auditing and carbon trading.

A new Citizens' Conservation Council will support B.C.'s mitigation efforts with public education campaigns that will give citizens the tools and information they need to make informed choices.

A new Youth Climate Leadership Alliance will be formed that will comprise students and other young people from across B.C.

It will undertake paid government-sponsored field research, mitigation work, afforestation projects and adaptation efforts. It will also lead a new Youth LiveSmart outreach campaign to encourage young British Columbians to make carbon-smart lifestyle choices that are good for the environment, their health, their pocketbooks and our planet.

Other LiveSmart BC education and outreach initiatives will be launched by the government and the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, an exciting new consortium involving UVic, UBC, UNBC and SFU.

It will bring together British Columbia's world leaders in conducting climate research and developing cutting-edge solutions. It will help shape our actions to mitigate global warming and adapt to its unavoidable consequences.

Changing temperatures and precipitation patterns are already affecting our weather, water cycles and ecology. Climate change is now impacting our forests, ecosystems, water levels, infrastructure, agriculture industry and recreational opportunities.

Risks of flooding and storm surges pose new threats for human health, safety and property.

Warmer temperatures and drier conditions are compounding insect infestations and wildfire threats in our forests and communities.

Your government will expand British Columbia's hydrometric and other climate-related networks to improve our ability to monitor, predict and adapt to these conditions.

It is responding with a new 10-year commitment to flood prevention, the Mountain Pine Beetle Strategy and the Wildfire Prevention Strategy.

This government will make the most of that beetle-killed wood while it is still viable and valuable for lumber, wood products, pulp and paper, and new opportunities in bioenergy.

We have few natural allies in our fight against climate change that are more important than our forests. Our trees clean the air, manage our watersheds, provide habitat for wildlife and protect the land.

Today, nearly 700,000 hectares of forest lands in British Columbia are not sufficiently restocked through reforestation.

Each year, new developments, urbanization, agricultural conversions, new power lines and other utility corridors contribute to deforestation.

That releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and removes millions of trees that are absorbing and storing carbon.

To reverse this problem, your government will pursue a goal of zero net deforestation. It will work with First Nations, industry and communities to put that goal into law by 2010 and establish a viable strategy for realizing that vision by 2015.

All forest land currently identified as not sufficiently restocked will be replanted and no "NSR" backlogs will be allowed to develop in ensuing years.

In addition to reforestation required by law of licensees, the Forests for Tomorrow program will plant an additional 60 million seedlings over the next four years.

It is reforesting areas of Crown land affected by the catastrophic wildfires of 2003 and 2004, and by the mountain pine beetle that would otherwise remain unplanted.

This will create new jobs and years of steady employment in rural communities and will be assisted by new research in planting equipment and forest species.

These are only some of the many initiatives your government is taking to leverage the challenges of global warming into opportunities for sustainable growth, stable jobs and more liveable communities.

But the challenge of sustainability is not restricted to the environment. It also challenges the long-term viability of our health services.

Living Smart Means Healthier Families and Sustainable Health Delivery

British Columbians were asked how we might strengthen our health system within the *Canada Health Act* and secure it for future generations during the Conversation on Health.

That Conversation produced valuable ideas and helped inform British Columbians about their health system, its challenges and the need for renewal.

This session your government will act to improve health care for the long term through a new emphasis on healthy lifestyles, prevention and accountability.

There will be one public payer for services under the *Canada Health Act* that will continue to deliver services through public and private service providers.

British Columbia's health care system will be built on an express commitment to accessibility, universality, portability, comprehensiveness and public — not private — administration.

Amendments will define and enshrine those five principles of the *Canada Health Act* under the *Medicare Protection Act*. A sixth principle of sustainability will be added to ensure our health care system will be there for our children, our grandchildren and their families.

The Medical Services Plan will be required to be administered in a manner that is fiscally sustainable and provides for British Columbians' current health needs without compromising future generations' entitlement to similar MSP benefits.

Other amendments will codify a commitment to building a public health care system that is founded on the values of individual choice, personal responsibility, innovation, transparency and accountability.

Our goal is an efficient, effective, integrated health system that promotes the health of all citizens, and provides high-quality patient care that is medically appropriate and ensures reasonable access to medically necessary services consistent with the *Canada Health Act*.

Citizens will gain new access to their health records and medical information so they can play an informed role in making both preventative and therapeutic care choices.

People who choose to, will have the option of staying in their homes with their families as long as possible at the end of life.

This year the government will undertake a study of the opportunities and costs involved in the establishment of a new Independent Living Savings Account framework.

It would allow citizens to choose to invest a certain portion of their income each year, up to age 75, in a tax-sheltered savings account that can be used for home care support, assisted independent housing and supportive housing options.

Patient choice and access will also be improved through major new investments in eHealth and expansions to BC NurseLine, including a new "specialist referral service."

Since December, your government has waived the three-month residency period to access MSP benefits for soldiers and their families who are serving our country in Afghanistan and elsewhere abroad.

As of today, British Columbia will waive the wait period for all Canadian soldiers and their families who move to B.C. from elsewhere in Canada.

Your government urges all provinces to do likewise to show our national gratitude to those who serve in our military.

With their sacrifices in mind each of us can ask: what are we doing to help our planet, our country and future generations?

The fight against climate change is our fight. The battle to save Medicare is our battle. We all must do our part.

All the money raised from sales tax, Medicare premiums, tobacco tax, health-care fees, federal health transfer payments and corporate income tax combined does not cover the costs of our health services.

Health expenditures have grown at more than twice the rate of growth in GDP over the last 20 years and at nearly quadruple inflation rates in this decade.

If we fail to come to grips with that trend, it will be our children and their families who will pay the highest price.

This obliges us to adopt new effective strategies that at once improve the health of our citizens, improve health delivery and protect our public health system for the long term.

Throughout the Conversation on Health there was overwhelming support for more focus on disease prevention and health promotion.

Diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and strokes rob aging individuals of their memories, motor skills and faculties. Mental illnesses like depression, schizophrenia and substance abuse typically begin in childhood, exerting a lifelong impact on the individual, their families and society.

The causes of childhood afflictions such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and Autism Spectrum Disorder remain poorly understood.

This legislature will be asked to approve major investments aimed at strengthening our ability to prevent and treat such conditions.

Your government will build on the expertise and success of the Brain Research Centre with a new Centre for Brain Health. It will help people avoid brain diseases and provide new treatment and rehabilitation options for patients.

B.C. is recognized across the country for its excellent work in cancer research.

Expanded pediatric oncology research will offer new hope for cancer prevention and treatment specifically focused on children.

Some 20 per cent of all hip fractures result in death and half of those who do survive are left with disabilities. Musculoskeletal diseases generate more direct and indirect costs than any other health condition in B.C.

New investments in the Centre for Hip Health and Musculoskeletal Research will be undertaken.

The Hip Centre will work to prevent falls and hip fractures through the development of early intervention programs for youth and seniors. It will enhance the detection of osteoarthritis at an early stage and the education of highly skilled scientists and clinicians.

Personal health starts with personal commitment to healthy eating, active living and responsible health management.

Your government will establish ActNow seniors' community parks throughout the province. They will be designed especially for seniors to help them stay mobile, physically active and healthy.

The best way to stay healthier later in life is to be health-smart all our lives.

Expectant parents have been given new tools and support to help them make healthy choices for their new babies.

Universal early screening programs have been introduced that have been complemented by early childhood development programs for infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

New daily minimum physical activity requirements are now in place for B.C. students.

Working with parents, educators and students, two new programs will be designed to provide our children with new opportunities for daily physical activities.

A new "Walking School Bus" program will be developed to enable young students to walk safely to their schools, accompanied by adults. A similar new program — the "Bicycle Train" — will give groups of children the chance to bicycle to class with adult supervision.

To encourage healthy eating, your government has introduced and is expanding the school fruit and vegetable nutritional program.

It has banned junk food in schools and vending machines in provincially-owned buildings.

It will now act to ban the use of trans fats in the preparation of foods in schools, restaurants and food-service establishments by 2010.

Smoking remains one of the most pernicious health threats to children.

It has now been banned in all indoor public spaces and on all school property. Yet more must be done.

The Canadian Cancer Society estimates that as many as one in five children are exposed to second-hand smoke while riding in passenger vehicles.

To ensure children are no longer subjected to second-hand smoke in any vehicle, new legislation will ban smoking in vehicles when children are present. There is nothing more precious or important than the health of our children.

BC Children's Hospital provides outstanding care for many of British Columbia's most seriously ill or injured children. It provides highly specialized services that are not available elsewhere in B.C.

Your government is committed to the upgrading and expansion of BC Children's Hospital. It will work with the BC Children's Hospital Foundation and the Provincial Health Services Agency to plan, modernize and refurbish that important health facility and improve its health services for children in all regions of British Columbia.

British Columbia has some of the best population health outcomes anywhere in the world. Yet each year, public health risks emerge.

Improvements to the *Public Health Act* will help deal decisively with these challenges and protect our citizens from infectious diseases and emergency health hazards.

Your government will strengthen its statutory capacity to guarantee the highest standards of safety and quality in service delivery.

A new BC Patient Safety Council will be established. It will enhance patient safety, reduce errors, promote transparency and identify best practices to improve patient care.

New Patient Care Quality Review Boards will also be established for all health regions. They will provide a clear, consistent, timely and transparent process for patients to register complaints about service quality or clinical appropriateness in the health system, including the residential care sector.

Health professionals are the lynchpins of quality health care. Access to qualified health professionals will be substantially expanded.

New legislative authority will be sought to ensure health professionals who are certified to practise in other Canadian jurisdictions will be welcomed to practise in B.C. and have their credentials recognized. This includes foreign-trained doctors.

A new restricted licence will allow internationally trained physicians to practise in their specific areas of qualification.

Residency positions will be significantly expanded to complement the recent doubling of medical school spaces. A new framework to allow Canadian citizens trained outside Canada to find residencies and practise in B.C. will be developed and implemented.

A three-year Bachelor of Nursing Science program will be established. It will permit nurses to gain their degree a year sooner with significant 'on-the-job' training.

Nurses will be trained and authorized to deliver a broader range of health services such as suturing, ultrasounds, allergy testing, local anaesthesia and cardiac stress testing.

They will be able to give medications for minor pain at triage while patients are waiting to see a doctor. They will be authorized to order lab work, blood tests and X-rays.

Amendments to the *Health Professions Act* will allow health providers the opportunity to utilize their full scope of training and expertise.

A new Health Profession Review Board will ensure that all qualified health workers can fully and appropriately utilize their training and skills, and not be denied that right by unnecessary credentialing and licensure restrictions.

Pharmacists will be permitted to authorize routine prescription renewals, making it easier for patients with chronic illnesses to manage their conditions.

Ambulance paramedics will be authorized to treat and release when appropriate. Naturopaths will be permitted to prescribe medicinal therapies as appropriate and restrictions on their access to medical labs for prescribed tests for patients will be removed.

Midwives will be authorized to deliver a broader range of services without a physician present to new and expectant mothers who choose to utilize their services.

These measures will be bolstered by expanded access to primary care, new independent living options, and improved service levels in assisted living and residential care.

Teams of health professionals working together for patients will be available 24 hours a day to provide clinically appropriate care that is now only available in emergency rooms.

New tools and support services will be created to help home caregivers and family members who are providing in-home care.

Better co-ordination of patient services across the Lower Mainland will reduce administration costs. Those revenues will be redirected to patient services.

Integrated approaches to health human resources training and recruitment, data collection, procurement and services will be implemented.

New investments will standardize information technology platforms and provide new tools for better managing and optimizing health expenditures.

Your government will also launch an innovation and integration fund for the Vancouver Coastal and Fraser Health Authorities to help move beyond "block funding" toward a new provincewide patient-centred funding model.

This new model will see health dollars follow patients, wherever they are treated. It will tie funding to performance and to increased service levels in specific priority areas, like emergency care and surgical backlogs.

These measures will improve the health of our citizens. They will improve access, choice, quality, transparency and accountability in public health delivery. They will make health care more sustainable.

Living Smart Means Safe, Supportive Communities

Safe, supportive communities encourage human interaction, citizen engagement and a heightened commitment to social responsibility.

They are places where women and children feel safe to walk outdoors and enjoy their parks.

The challenges of poverty, mental illness and addictions compound the societal challenges of housing, homelessness and crime.

There are victims and casualties in our society — injured, hurt, lost, isolated people who cannot find their way off the street, into a home, out of addiction and back to health.

Additional efforts to guide them to healthier lives will be immediately launched, as an updated 10-year mental health plan is also completed.

Communities will be required to include provision for mental health and addiction service facilities in their community plans.

Expanded outreach programs will help lift people out of the street and offer them personalized support.

Patients with severe mental illnesses who require intensive, sustained and complex medical treatment will be provided care in new and existing facilities at Willingdon in Burnaby, which will be retrofitted and opened this year, and at Riverview in Coquitlam.

People in the Downtown Eastside and elsewhere who can't cope will be cared for in safe and secure facilities until they are well. They will not be abandoned or consigned to a life of despair and destitution on the streets.

Your government has tripled its investments in housing and other initiatives aimed at breaking the cycle of homelessness. That has helped thousands of people find more affordable and appropriate housing.

Over 4,300 families have been given new support through the rent supplement program. It will be expanded this year.

A "211" service, in partnership with the United Way, will be launched to give citizens new telephone access to information about the full range of social services offered in their communities.

This will especially help women, seniors and persons with disabilities find support services that are delivered by multiple levels of government and private providers.

Supports for women fleeing abusive relationships, assisted living options and income assistance programs have all been enhanced.

More will be done, as your government implements the Hughes recommendations on child protection, improves programs to prevent violence against women, and increases support to people with developmental disabilities, children with special needs and their families.

A new multi-year investment will be made to revitalize Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

Anchored by the new Woodward's project, new public initiatives will be undertaken in partnership with the city and the neighbourhoods to enhance the 40-block area that includes Gastown, Chinatown, Strathcona and Japantown.

Those improvements will be reinforced by new housing investments for people in the area. This government will work with the city and the community to restore hope, pride and a safer, healthier environment for all who call these neighbourhoods home.

Community safety will continue to be a major focus of attention for your government.

New actions will be taken to better prevent, enforce and prosecute crime; and to enhance public confidence in our police and courts.

Two public inquiries have recently been initiated to serve that end.

Amendments to the *Police Act* will aim to implement Josiah Wood's recommendations to improve transparency, accountability and public confidence in the police complaints process.

British Columbians want to understand why sentences in their province tend to be shorter than in other provinces for crimes such as homicide, theft, property crimes, fraud, impaired driving and drug possession.

A comprehensive review of sentencing practices in B.C. courts will address those questions. It will also assess how the federal government's anti-crime measures might affect demands on our police, Crown prosecutors, courts and correctional system.

That information will all contribute to a Community Safety Strategy that will be released this fall.

It will build on recent initiatives to fight the scourge of crystal meth, gang violence, drug-related homicides, grow-ops, street racing, dangerous driving and property crimes.

That strategy will include enhanced policing, new community courts and expanded correctional capacity.

Your government will also work with local governments to explore the potential to further integrate policing and to examine the possibilities for amalgamating police forces and creating safer communities.

Living Smart Means Educational Excellence

Education is the key to our future.

Dozens of recent measures have improved quality, access, choice and accountability in education at all levels. Others are improving literacy for people of all ages.

Funding is up at record levels, average class sizes are down, and completion rates are up.

There is more choice in schooling and curriculum, and new Internet-based access to education. Parents now have a direct role in school planning. Teachers have higher pay cheques and will soon have an unfettered right to practise here and in Alberta.

A new program leading to a certificate in leadership will be introduced for teachers. New powers will be given to the College of Teachers to remove the teaching certificate of any member who is found to be incompetent.

Immediate steps will continue to strengthen early childhood learning.

Eighty-four StrongStart BC centres have opened to help preschool-age children and their parents get ready for kindergarten. Another 316 centres will be added in the next two years, for a total of 400 StrongStart centres that will be open across B.C. by 2010.

A new Early Childhood Learning Agency will be established. It will assess the feasibility and costs of full school day kindergarten for five-year-olds. It will also undertake a feasibility study of providing parents with the choice of day-long kindergarten for four-year-olds by 2010, and for three-year-olds by 2012. That report will be completed and released within the year.

A new Centre for Autism Education and Research will be developed. It will provide a residential environment for children with autism and create a national hub for research and a centre for parental supports.

Today, as a result of post-secondary expansion, students with a B average or better can look forward to advancing their education here in B.C.

Your government is now providing $1,000 to each new child born or adopted in B.C. on or after January 1, 2007. That money is collecting interest year after year, in credit towards their future post-secondary education needs.

This year, new steps will be taken to expand B.C.'s public university system, provide new clarity of purpose in our post-secondary institutions and create new opportunities for higher learning.

Funding will be targeted where it is needed most, to meet skills demands with added training capacity for skilled workers.

Major expansions to the Provincial Nominee Program and the successful Skills Connect for Immigrants program will also help meet new demands for skilled workers.

Post-secondary students will be given new consumer protection as institutional accountability is strengthened under the new Education Quality Assurance program.

This will enhance both our international educational initiatives and the marketability of our institutions abroad, particularly in the Asia Pacific, which is so central to your government's vision for a strong economy.

In the new creative economy, art and culture are increasingly recognized as critical competitive advantages in attracting and retaining skilled workers and building an enlightened society.

As a legacy of our 150th anniversary, major new investments will be earmarked to significantly enhance British Columbia's contributions to art and culture.

A major new arts endowment will provide lasting benefits to all British Columbians.

The Vancouver Art Gallery will enhance its international reputation as a showcase of B.C. art of all genres, cultures and regions. New steps will be

taken to elevate both its international profile and the profile of B.C. artists' rich talent, creative capacity and inspiring originality.

To celebrate our maritime heritage, your government will support the establishment of a National Maritime Centre for the Pacific and the Arctic in North Vancouver.

Subject to federal matching dollars, that world-class Centre will be developed as a public-private partnership. It will be an important legacy for British Columbians and Canadians alike.

The Key to Smart Growth is a Strong Economy

Our economy is strong. Small business remains the most confident in Canada. It is the jobs engine that continues to see B.C. leading the nation in job creation.

Energy, mining, technology, construction, manufacturing, small business, retail, tourism, transportation and other sectors are doing well. But like other economies in North America, ours is being buffeted by some very strong winds, especially in forestry.

The new Working Roundtable on Forestry will recommend new possibilities for forestry, including new tenures. A 90-day regulatory and process review will cut unnecessary administrative and process costs.

Working with industry and labour, new pension bridging opportunities will be developed for older workers nearing retirement. New training opportunities will also be offered to help forest workers who have been temporarily laid off to upgrade skills and earning potential.

New tenures will increase access to waste material left on forest floors after harvesting, so that it can be converted to clean, renewable bioenergy.

The new BC Bioenergy Strategy will create new opportunities in cellulosic ethanol, biodiesel and other clean, renewable fuels. It's part of the new BC Energy Plan that will help make British Columbia an alternative energy powerhouse in the Pacific Century.

The consultation now underway will continue to advance the potential for Site C, which could be a major economic catalyst for rural British Columbia in years to come.

A new northern energy corridor from Prince Rupert to Prince George will also be pursued. That alone holds the potential for billions of dollars in new investment that will create new high-paying jobs for the North.

The Port of Prince Rupert is revitalizing northern and rural economies and creating a powerful platform for future development. The next phase of that port development will be pursued, in co-operation with First Nations and the federal government.

Working with the federal government, a new integrated Pacific Ports Strategy will also be developed, to make the most of Canada's Pacific Gateway.

Our agriculture industries are progressing, with our award-winning wineries leading the way. A new British Columbia Agriculture Plan will ensure farming continues to have a bright future in our province.

Amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* will improve protection for farm workers and prohibit agricultural producers from using unlicensed farm labour contractors.

The Future is Full of New Promise for British Columbia

In precisely two years, people from around the world will see how far we have come over the last 150 years.

They will see what British Columbians now see and feel: a province that is opening the door to Canada's Pacific Century.

A place that celebrates the creativity of our artists, the discoveries of our scientists, the resolve of our rural communities and the vitality of our cities and towns.

A people who are acting to bridge generational challenges and leave the world a better place.

A province living its Olympic dream, hosting the greatest sport and cultural spectacle on Earth.

In 2010, the world will see the majesty of our landscapes, the strength of our diversity, and the wealth of our human and natural potential. It will feel the promise of British Columbia.

And British Columbians will revel in that moment and the pride of all we have accomplished together.

The goals we have set for ourselves are great and the path your government is charting for our province is challenging.

But British Columbians' dreams are never small and are always earned. They are about reaching higher.

In this, a special year in our history, let us not shrink from our responsibilities to see beyond our lifetimes to a better time.

The best is yet to come for British Columbia. As has been said before, "history and our own conscience will judge us harsher if we do not now make every effort to test our hopes by action."